

An Essay
on

That form of disease
Nowologically called
Dysentery

Dysentery

3 vols



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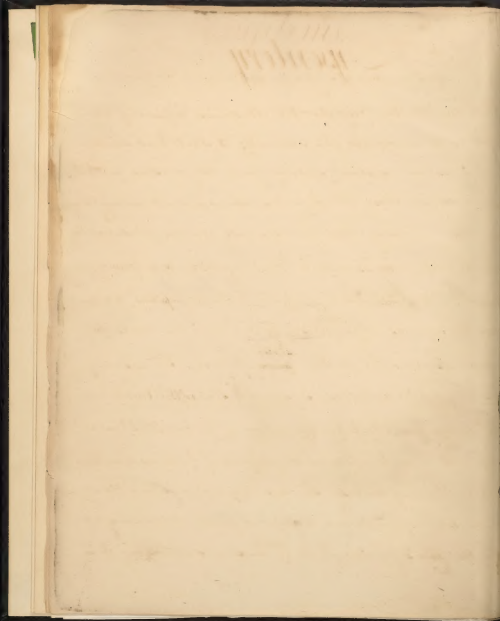
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Dysentery

With my worthy preceptor the illustrious professor of the institutes of medicine in this university; I shall consider dysentery as an intestinal state of fever; My reasons for this opinion are those which he has advanced and among them are the following. that fever is a unit whithur produced by heat, cold or miasmata &c. that dysentery is a form of fever, which is indicated by the pulse & other symptoms; appearing the same as are in ^{other} forms of fever & that the cure is the same as indicated in other ^{states} ~~forms~~ of fevers. The dysentery usually appears in those seasons and states of the atmosphere which are favorable to the generation of the remittent & intermittent and the other intestinal forms of fever as diarrhoea & cholera morbus. The dysentery appears in either a mild, inflammatory or malignant grade, depending upon the causes preceding & the circumstances attending it.

Symptoms.

The symptoms which characterise this form of disease are various and different. I will enumerate some of them as mentioned by Authors & such as have come under my own notice ~~at~~ in the country. It Sometimes commences with costiveness & at others with a laxity of the bowels with all the symptoms of diarrhoea. "In most cases it commences with griping and frequent inclinations to go to stool," Nausea & vomiting Sometimes — Occurs: The pulse is either synocha, synochula, typhus or typhoid. As this form of disease advances the symptoms enumerated increase in violence & unless they are subdued by the power of medicine, the torture of the unhappy patient will soon be terminated by death. But this once formidable state of fever which swept away thousands, is now under the controul of medicine, & the new principles in medicine taught by Dr Rush has met the Hydria in its forming state & thus conquered ~~that~~ a disease which formerly was but too frequently fatal, in consequence of that

undue attachment to nosology, which invariably compels us to
wait untill it is completely evolved, its symptoms and diag-
nostics become evident, and then the duty of the Physician -
was, to pronounce the name & seat of the disease; seek in his nosol-
ogical arrangement for the disease its cure - And thus give
Medicines which were ordered perhaps a number of Years ago
in a different Country, Climate and Constitution, not paying
any attention to the state of the system, grade or malignity of the
present disease, as if the disease were as invariable in its char-
acteristics as the Lion or the Oak &c. The experience of ages
has taught us that disease changes with the atmosphere, cli-
mate, Constitution & age of the patient, & that disease never appears
twice with the same symptoms. Physicians have too late been
taught this & by attending to nosological arrangements - have
seen with the most poignant regrets, their friends & relations die
After all the materia medica had been exhausted to no purpose -
If the sword has slain its thousands I may safely assert that
nosology has slain its ten of thousands - it has had its reign,
error & ignorance may ride triumphant, for a time. But truth
& science will obtain their just superiority & regain their high
Station - This happy revolution in medical science was fostered

ed in the republic of our country, and the enlightened Risch
under the auspices of genius and talents, has promulgated & taught
theory and principles in medicine, which for simplicity & truth
were never equalled, they not only discard nosology from the
practice of Physicians, but they compel a physician to be ever
watchful of his patient's care, & like a guardian angel, ^{watch} the chang-
ing state of his system & pulse which he happily calls - "the nosom-
eter of the body, or is to the system, what the hands are to a
watch," thus telling every movement within & showing every de-
parture from health. - It is true there are some exceptions but
these are rare - And when the pulse refuses to indicate the state
of the system from accidental circumstances, as diseased hearts,
pressure of surrounding muscles or a wrong direction of the
radial artery, other parts of the body will perform a vicarious
office as the eye, Tongue, Countenance &c. —

Discharge from the intestines.

They are various in their consistence, colour and nature. Sometimes 'faeces' are discharged in the form of balls called scybala, blood, blood & mucous the last sometimes with faecal matter, Membrane of blood, lumps of fat, Sometimes there is no discharge upwards or downwards, which indicates the highest grade. Requires prompt & potent remedies which will be taken notice of presently. Tenesmus frequently accompanies the discharge or is a symptom. It is very distressing & is caused by "scybala, ulcers in the rectum, acuminony & a diseased contiguous viscera as the bladder" &c. —

Appearance of Intestines after Death

1st No marks of disease owing to the grade of disease trans-
-cending the Inflammatory point. —

2^d Inflammations.

3^d Membrane

4th Pustules

5th Mucous

6th Tubercles

7th Gangrene

Diagnosis.

In a former part of this Essay, I have attempted to show the fallacy of Nosology, and all rules drawn from it. - I therefore hope I shall be excused for not mentioning any diagnostics. No form or grade of disease can monopolize any pathognomonic sign as it is continually changing - a blind attachment, to prejudice or error although supported by the first Physicians of the age is highly injurious, in medical science. When the health of our fellow citizens are at stake, I shall therefore pass over this part of my subject in silence.

Prognosis.

In every state of fever, the signs indicative of returning health or approaching death are so various and uncertain - that the most scientific & experienced physicians on prognostication of disease are frequently disappointed; - I hope it will be excusable in an inexperienced youth in not attempting any,

Remote Causes,

These are such as act directly on the alimentary canal & such as act indirectly, through the medium of the System generally. To the first belong miasmata, it and heat appear to be the chief remote causes. They are also sometimes the exciting causes. When the Atmosphere is heated and charged with the effluvia arising from stables &c. entering the body - act very powerfully on the intestines. Whether it is by the miasmata causing an increased secretion & excretion ^{of the liver} and thus by its acrimony in the intestines, cause, dysentery, I shall not determine. If it be so, the importance of that very important viscous will be much augmented. It has already been proved by Dr Rush that many forms of disease whose causes were formerly supposed to be different to originate from a diseased State of the liver. And if this one be added it will add another powerfull argument in favour of the unity of disease, That dysentery sometimes proceeds from the causes acting primarily on the

the liver and producing disease is highly probable from dissec-
tion. Mr. Clark treating of the diseases of India mentions several
Cases of dysentery which on dissection proved that the liver was
diseased. He in several cases believes the diseased state of the
liver was the cause of dysentery as will appear from the fol-
lowing quotations, after mentioning the appearances on dis-
section in the intestines he says "the liver was much small-
er than natural, being probably only a third part of its usual
size. It was also unusually pale, hard and unequal, but did
not contain any purulent matter. I am of opinion that the
obstructed state of the liver was probably the cause of the dys-
entery as well as the enlargement of the spleen & ascites.
At the same time the dysentery was undoubtedly the immediate
cause of death," In another place page 181 our Author says
when speaking of the dissection of a patient who died of dys-
entery "There were several collections of matter in different parts
of the liver which could have had very little share in oc-
casioning death. He never complained of pain in the hepatic
region," We also read in the same author page 94, of the
dissection of a dysenteric patient as follows "On the surface of
the liver there were several white coloured spots, evidently indicating
the presence of purulent matter, and when cut into a consider-

able quantity was discharged, From a consideration of this case.

I think we may justly infer that the obstructed state of the liver was the cause of the affection in the bowels & consequently of Death.

From the consideration of these facts, I make no hesitation in asserting that the diseased state of the liver sometimes produces dysentery. A vegetable diet has a tendency to induce this disease. Cold is also one of the remote causes - Contagion has been supposed to be the remote cause of dysentery, however plausible it may appear, I think it is entirely unfounded. The effluvia arising from the excretions especially the feces of a dysenteric patient may be one of the exciting causes in producing this form of fever. I will not deny. But that it has ever acted as a remote cause without being assisted by other causes either remote or exciting, I think quite improbable. As Marsh Measurata is one of the most usual remote causes of dysentery. It is reasonable to suppose those breathing the same air and living on the same aliments & drinks would be attacked by the same form of fever. But this never will take place unless there exist a similarity of constitution & a predisposition to the disease. It spreading whole neighbourhoods & families, I do not consider as any proof of its contagious nature.

ture. The Intermittent & other forms of fever frequently occur in the night & our household families yet we do not call them contagious. Many Individuals have been attacked by this form of fever after being exposed to the effluvia of a sick room - and many others have not. When this was the case I should always infer, that a previous predisposition existed to the exciting cause, as the effluvia from the excretions, & shed in the disease. To believe in the contagious nature of the dysentery would be attended with the most dreadful consequence. What attendants could we procure for the patients, if they were hourly exposed to its baneful attacks; The unhappy patient must suffer, languish & die. See his friends depart & leave him to his fate. How inconsistent, with the dictates of humanity & how derogatory to the godlike character of a physician. I cannot pass over this part of my Subject without mentioning another injurious effect of nosology in ranking a certain number of the forms of fever under the head of contagious. How repugnant to Christianity. When they believe the form of fever to be contagious, the patient is deserted, and hence the heart-rending cry from the sick room of a patient attacked with malignant fever, "Don't leave me, Don't

leave me," calling most true hearts to be sensibly & in answer
to the warm feelings of Christian love who could close his ears
against such heart rending appeals —

Predisposing cause,
Debility.
Exciting causes,

The exciting causes of this form of fever are the same as both other forms. From the numbers which are afflicted with it after being exposed to the effluvia evolved from the excretions of a dysenteric patient. I believe such effluvia is a highly exciting cause and from this occurring so often, there is no doubt, but ~~that~~ ^{that} we may ascribe to it, the origin of the contagious nature of the dysentery. —

Proximate cause,

It would be useless in me to enumerate all the proximate causes which have been assigned to dysentery - as a great number of them are consigned to that oblivion they so justly merit. Dr Cullen believed it to be a spasm. That spasm may occur I do not doubt. But that spasm is a cause of dysentery is quite improbable - Dr Rush believes spasm is one of the primary forms of fever. It is the effect & not the cause as well might we say a fever in the lungs produces in the liver or water in the brain to be the cause of consumption, hepatitis or hydrocephalus internus.

Dr Rush has taught morbid action to be the proximate cause, & considers the proximate cause & disease to be the same. Some opposition has been made to this opinion but upon what grounds I cannot understand. It appears to be a dispute merely about names, as those who are opposed to it, deny that the proximate cause can be the disease & the cause cannot be the effect, this controversy I will not decide, - But propose to enquire what is meant by the proximate cause or where is the necessity for it. It I believe exists only in a

die, a child of fancy & imagination. The remote cause act
its on the debilitated part of the system. By the exciting cause
brought into action disease, which disease I believe with Dr
Rush to be morbid excitement, in the blood vessels. Dr. Rush
calls this the proximate cause & says it is disease. - I cannot see
the propriety of a proximate cause without ^{we} call the exciting
causes also the proximate causes, as there has been more disputes
about the proximate cause of disease than I think it is entitled to.
I shall discard it, because I think it merely a name & of no prac-
tical use thereby obviating that futile argument against the unity
of disease & morbid excitement, and say that the remote cause
acted upon the debilitated system which ~~by~~ brought into
action by the exciting causes, disease or morbid excitement,
which consists in the "partial and irregular operation of
disordered & debilitated nature". It is our duty to render this
partial & irregular operation, equal & regular, & restore na-
ture from disorder to ^{order} & debility to strength, or in other words
to equalize the excitement & excitability, for this partial
action constitutes disease. To do this ^{we} will pursue the method

Method of Cure.

In entering upon the method of Cure I wish in the first place to Observe, that no uniform mode of treatment, can be recommended for any grade of disease. As every form of fever is continually changing, we must pay attention to the State of the System & pulse. With this view I shall mention those remedies recommended by Authors, & those which I have seen exhibited with the best advantage. And first of Blood letting. In the mild Inflammatory grades of this fever where the pulse is not much affected, bleeding is of little Service. The blood Vessels of the Intestines being situated so remote from the general Circulation that Bleeding in the Inflammatory Stage is of very little Service, unless carried to such extent as would endanger the general System of the patient, & debilitate it below the point of reaction. This being the case in the Inflammatory Stage it is our Intent, to obtain a medicine which would seduce the Action of the blood Vessels of the Intestines, without much debilitating the general system. To obtain this end

emulating cathartics have been found most efficacious —

And the one which has been found the best in the practice of
my former preceptor Dr. Jenkins is the

Spicacuanha.

Its Virtues in curing the inflammatory Stage of dysentery are
very great and recommends it to the attention of the Medi-
cal World, Dr. Jenkins has given it in every case which has
come under his care and with the happiest success. Its good
effects appears to arise from its power in inducing the action of
the blood vessels of the intestines. But in what manner it
produces this effect, I will not pretend to say, but leave it
to able and more scientific pens. We should suppose
reasoning a priori that other cathartics, as Glauca's Salty
Castor Oil &c. Would have the same effect in reducing the ac-
tion, experience however & what that tried in my preceptor's
hands have taught me the fallacy of such an opinion,
invariably finding that this effect, was not such as to

of the ipecacuanha which immediately stops the progress
of the disease. Dr. Junkin's favorite prescription is in the form of
pills of two or three grains if the stomach will bear it, ^{half} every ^{hour}
untill a moderate evacuation is produced, keeping the patient
in bed promoting a perspiration. - When the dysentery is high-
ly inflamm^{atory}, blood letting must be used, and the ipecacuanha
joined with balsam of is highly necessary, Demulcents & mucil-
aginous drinks are to be given, in order to relieve the pain, and
blunt the Acrimony of the faeces. When the Stomach refuses to
retain the ipecacuanha, it can be given in the form of injection
With good effect, and in confirmation of it, I will quote a few
lines from W. Clarke who says "The form of Injection which I
have found to answer best, has been three drams of ipecacuanha
root, bruised and boiled in a quart to a pint of Water and
given as an injection at once," also Starch Injections or -
Starch combined With ipecacuanha has been found to
Answer very Well in some cases. Emetic tartar, Rhubarb
~~and~~ have been given by some Physicians With success

but having never given them nor seen them prescribed I shall
pass them over; being contented with the one under Consider-
ation. If the ipecacuanha should answer the same end in the
hands of other physicians as well as my preceptors - It will be of
great benefit to mankind, It is a plant of our own country &
can be obtained cheap which certainly is an object when at-
tending on the Indigent. After the Inflammatory action has been
reduced by the above depletion; the chalky Julap or opiate may be
given. If the Stomach will not retain them, they can be thrown up
the rectum. Blisters are highly useful in Translating Morbid excite-
ment from a more to a less vital part of the System. They should never
be applied until the system is reduced in some degree. They
should be applied to the limbs or ancles in preference to any other
part. The manner of their acting I do not know unless by the Sympa-
thy of Continuity, which appears to be the most plausible & correct
theory of any I have heard. The above plan of Cure has always answered
with Dr. Joubert in the inflamm^matory Stage. But dysentery appears some-
times under so malignant a form & the system so prostrated as to forbid every
kind of depletion. Here Barks, opium and cordials should

be administered freely as they are the only remedies which can
save the patients.

Thus Gentlemen have I finished my Essay, It is imperfect,
from its brevity, my ill state of ~~Health~~ and want of time, these
reasons & my inexperience I hope will shield it from that just
criticism which no doubt it merits, accept of my thanks for
your assiduity in teaching me while I was a student & I am
particularly indebted to Professor Barton who has acted
towards me as a friend, I hope in my future life, he will
still continue to be one.

